

**Final Report Academic Affairs Committee
2018-2019**

- 19 Ambre Ellison (SON)
- 19 Ayse Erdogan (JCBE)
- 19 Jim LaMee (LIB)
- 19 Laura Jennings (SCW) (recording secretary)
- 20 Chris Bender (NSE)
- 20 Frank Li (MCS)

- 20 Rich Murphy (LLC)
- 20 Susan Richardson (INFO)
- 21 Jan Griffin (PSY)
- 21 Charley Harrington (IDS)
- 21 Carmen Harris (HPPA) (chair)
- 21 Rebecca Mueller (SOE)
- 21 Nolan Stolz (FACS)

The Academic Affairs Committee met 9 times on a monthly basis from September 14, 2018 to April 6, 2019 including twice in March.

The Committee took action on a total of 266 items 24 of which were reviewed twice. Two new academic programs, a new minor, and an academic certificates were approved. 38 revised academic programs and 9 revised minors and 14 general education changes were approved. 91 new courses, 82 revised courses and 8 deleted courses were approved. Twelve academic regulations, 4 program regulations, and 2 grade changes were approved.

Over the course of the year the committee reviewed and approved changes the following *twenty-eight* major programs including modifications to program policies:

College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	College of Science and Technology	Mary Black School of Nursing
<p>FACS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Journalism <p>LLC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. English 2. Spanish <p>SCW</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Criminal Justice Residential Program 2. Criminal Justice Palmetto College <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. New concentration in both 	<p>Informatics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Health Informatics 2. Information and Management Systems 3. HIM 4. Engineering Technology Management 5. Advanced Manufacturing Management <p>Graduate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Masters in Informatics <p>Math and Computer Science</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Computer Information Systems 2. Cybersecurity (new) 3. Computer Science 4. Mathematics <p>NSE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Biology 2. Chemistry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Change in Undergraduate Admissions Policy 2. RN to BSN <p>Graduate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Masters of Science in Nursing 2. Nursing Educator (new track) 3. Nursing Leadership (new track) 4. RN to MSN (new track) 5.

School of Education, Human Performance and Health	Johnson School of Business
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Middle Grades Education (single concentration) 2. Community Health (new) 3. Secondary Education Chemistry 4. Secondary Education Mathematics 5. Secondary Education History 6. Secondary Education Spanish 7. Exercises Science <p>Graduate</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Applied Learning and Instruction 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. JCBE Mission Update 2. JCBE Admission GPA: Clarification 3. BS in Business Administration (multiple concentrations): <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Accounting concentration b. LSCM concentration c. Econ/Fin concentration d. Management Concentration e. Entrepreneurship and Innovation

Changes consisted of course additions, deletions, description and credit hour changes, creation or modification of concentrations academic regulations changes

Academic Regulation Changes

1. Removal of requirement of cognates in College of Science and Technology and modification of the cognate policy
2. Change in Academic Suspension Policy
3. Credit by Examination
4. Fourteen General Education course changes
5. Music Cognate
6. Regulation of Offer a Certificate
7. Regulation for a Second Degree

The committee also approved one new minors (*), a certificate**, and revised *eight* minors:

College of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences	College of Science and Technology
FACS Mass Media IDS Non-Profit Administration LLC American Sign Language* Creative Writing German Studies Global Studies**	Informatics and Engineering Systems IMS
School of Education, Human Performance and Health	
Sport Strength and Conditioning	

Changes consisted of course additions, deletions, and credit hour adjustments

Over the summer, Carmen Harris and past-chair Chris Bender will work with faculty chair Lizabeth Zack to revise committee forms

Nolan Stoltz was elected chair and Rebecca Mueller was elected recording secretary for 2019-2020.

A Note from the Chair

Three issues the committee addressed have broader implications for the faculty which I wish to historicize in this report.

Issue 1: the Chair of AAC and Chair of the Graduate Committee should either attend each other's meetings as needed to provide advice and context on matters related to curriculum or serve formally as ex-officio and attend all meetings.

The Academic Affairs Committee is the committee through which all courses and programs are voted upon before proceeding to the Faculty Senate. It is expected that this will alleviate some issues that arose when forms approved by the graduate committee were not in proper form.

Issue 2: Use of part-time faculty as instructor of record in multiple courses and/or as primary faculty in programs

American Sign Language is a new minor in which first one and then several part-time instructors were listed as instructor of record after the first submission was tabled. All course work in the program will be taught by part-time faculty. The AAC initially tabled the package on the principle that we should not build minors using part-time faculty lest it establishes a precedent that might accrete into using part-time faculty to justify creation of programs. Reliance on contingent faculty for delivery of our courses is problematic for several reasons. First: these persons and their credentials are vetted only by a department chair rather than a full committee. Although the AAC is presented with instructor credentials when reviewing new course proposals and programs, this is not substitute for the regular process of hiring and vetting colleagues who may propose courses and programs that align with qualifications, positions, and interests. The vote on this minor in the AAC was split. However, as the Faculty Senate did not inquire about that aspect of the proposal, I did not feel it appropriate to raise it. However, I encourage my colleagues to take note of this practice and decide whether they want to have this become common practice.

Issue 3: Attendance Policy

This policy was submitted to us twice. The first time it was withdrawn because LLC did not want to accept amendments to the policy. The second time it was voted down. It is important to understand that the process of revising the attendance policy has been ongoing for several years. Two versions were submitted to AAC this year. The first only excused student absence for university-sanctioned events and religious observance. After feedback essentially the same policy was re-submitted but enlarged to include military service and jury duty.

Despite the fact that Christmas, occurs during our Winter break, the break is not a "religious holiday" any more than the religious observances between May 16 and August 15 make summer break a religious holiday. In theory student who is from an interfaith family could rack up substantial absences without penalty with the policy we were asked to review and without a faculty member being able to establish limits. The policy was silent on how excused absences count when a faculty member has elected to establish an attendance policy. In other words, can a student use all non-penalized absences a professor for reasons outside those excused and then also have the privileged absences excused as well. As an example of how that might affect student attendance consider the following: I allow 5 absences without

penalty in my MWF classes. If there was a student athlete who was on the track team and that student used all the absences I permit and then was absent the additional 9 Fridays for track the student would miss fully 1/3 of the class.

Participation in athletics is a ticket to higher education and a better life for some students. I informally polled several faculty who I know have “strict” attendance policies. When I asked them how they dealt with absences for university representation. Every one of them said “I work with them.” However the proposed policy also imposed some hardships that could require excessive uncompensated labor by some faculty members as is explained appendix below which is responses I received when I distributed the policy.

USC Upstate 2018-2019 Athletic Schedule	
Sport	Week Day Events
Baseball	7
Men’s Basketball	8
Women’s Basketball	10
Cross Country	5
Men’s Golf	11
Women’s Golf	15
Softball	8
Men’s Tennis	13
Women’s Tennis	10
Track and Field	9 (all Fridays)
Volleyball	9

This is an issue that I believe the faculty should resolve rather than have a solution imposed upon them. Some institutions, for example, Coastal Carolina, has an attendance policy that includes a long list of instances for which faculty have no choice about excusing. We could go that way. I personally prefer the USC Columbia approach. They privilege no type of absence but suggest types of absences that could be excused. They recently revised their “10 percent rule” to 15 percent. What that means is that no faculty member who establishes an attendance policy could penalize a student for absences before they cross that threshold. That would mean students could miss up to 6 absences in a MWF class or 4 on TTH class. Granted this would not cover our student athletes but it would be generous enough for other students.

In reading the Columbia policy I infer that “excused” permits students to make-up work without penalty as it establishes sanctions for students who abuse the policy as it relates to submitting work. The policy we reviewed had no way for a faculty member to determine which religious observances are crucial to faith and which are optional. The Columbia policy does. The suggested list of excusable absences beyond 15 percent is more diverse and inclusive than the one that we reviewed.

It is my hope that in raising faculty awareness regarding the complexity of this issue that the faculty collectively can play a central role in crafting a policy that is equitable for faculty and students as well as giving most of us, who never think about it unless we have an athlete in our class, some idea of the magnitude of the challenges they face while essentially “paying” for their education through sports.

Appendix One: Faculty feedback on Attendance Policy

- 1) The way the proposed policy is worded, the Official excused absences for the two reasons listed (intercollegiate or religious) sound like they would/might not be counted against the absences in the faculty members' attendance policy. The second paragraph is below, with highlighted inserted words to try to make clear excused absences can/may be counted towards total absences:

Excused absences do not absolve a student of responsibility for the completion of all assigned work in the class. It is the responsibility of the student to complete any work missed during an absence. Students should note that an instructor has the right to establish the attendance policy for each class and may choose to exact a grade penalty after a certain number of absences, including excused absences. The number of absences and the grade penalty must be outlined in the syllabus and communicated to students on the first day of class.

- 2) Something about this language:

"No right or privilege exists that permits a student to be absent from any class meetings except for excused absences for students who are representing the University in official University-sanctioned activities"

bothers me. True, no right or privilege exists, but lots of competing responsibilities exist, including parenting and jobs.

I support the idea of changing to language that addresses students more, but some of this seems like it could have the effect of punishing parents, particularly single parents, particularly moms.

Thoughts?"

- 3) It looks fine to me. If I read it correctly, members of the faculty retain the option of not taking attendance so long as they let the students know up front in the syllabus. (I personally take attendance, but some of my colleagues believe that not taking attendance cultivates self-discipline.)
- 4) Reads well and makes sense but, while not stated, this applies only to traditional face-to-face courses. Online operates differently and those properties unique to online should be addressed in a policy as well. Will there be a separate statement for online instructors or should it be here? I believe that is a separate issue for the following reasons:

1. Absences are judged by log-in attempts rather than empty seats on a specific class day. However, that is not a sufficient as defined and measured by the federal mandates for student aid (see: <https://ifap.ed.gov/ifap/byAwardYear.jsp?type=fsahandbook>) Participation is considered as part of measuring absenteeism and the feds define what is meant by participation which have implications for hybrid and wholly online courses.

2. An online instructor and student using the policy presented here may be under the impression that logging in once a week in an online course is sufficient to be noted as present for that week. Are athletes etc. exempt from logging in that week if they have a game that only takes a day? In other words, is missing a class the same as missing an online module?

Western Baptist University has a policy that you may wish to consider which addresses both the federal student aid concerns as well as implications for how instructors may determine someone who needs to be summarily withdrawn.

“Online Students – Students are expected to participate in all required instructional activities in their courses. Online courses are no different in this regard; however, participation must be defined in a different manner.

1. Student “attendance” in an online course is defined as active participation in the course as described in the course syllabus. Instructors in online courses are responsible for providing students with clear instructions for how they are required to participate in the course. Additionally, instructors are responsible for incorporating specific instructional activities within their course and will, at a minimum, have weekly mechanisms for documenting student participation. These mechanisms may include, but are not limited to, participating in a weekly discussion board, submitting/completing assignments in Blackboard, or communicating with the instructor.
2. Students aware of necessary absences must inform the professor with as much advance notice as possible in order to make appropriate arrangements.
3. Any student absent 25 percent or more of the online course, i.e., non-participatory during 3 or more weeks of an 11 week term, may receive an F for that course. Instructors may also file a Report of Unsatisfactory Progress for students with excessive non-participation.
4. Any student who has not actively participated in an online class prior to the census date for any given term is considered a “no-show” and will be administratively withdrawn from the class without record. To be counted as actively participating, it is not sufficient to log in and view the course. The student must be submitting work as described in the course syllabus.
5. Additional attendance and participation policies for each course, as defined by the instructor in the course syllabus, are considered a part of the university’s attendance policy.”

Retrieved from: <https://wbuvc.wordpress.com/2013/04/08/new-attendance-policy-for-online-courses/>

Let me know if I can answer any questions or if you feel these concerns are unwarranted.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute.

5) Comments on Attendance Policy

[Here's a comment from someone in NSE about the attendance policy:](#)

Because the catalog is the legally binding agreement between the student and university, the proposed policy creates a contractual right for students to miss any or all class meetings for athletics or religious holidays. This is a problem in any class that uses active learning techniques, where learning happens during class time. However, it is especially a problem in laboratories, where students learn, practice and demonstrate skills during the laboratory. When we award laboratory credit in the sciences, we are certifying that the student has demonstrated competency in the ability to safely and accurately use laboratory equipment. This attendance policy explicitly creates a right for students to miss classes and laboratories so long as they are representing the university. Doing so will either force instructors to submit grades that misrepresent the student's demonstrated skills or force the instructor to invest many hours of uncompensated work outside of normal class time.

As an example of why this is a problem, we have a student athlete who expected to miss half of the laboratory meetings (I think 7 meetings) for CHEM 112 laboratory this semester due to her athletic schedule. The policy's statement that she is responsible for making up the lab work would have been meaningless because she could not do so outside of lab and the lab set-up is torn down to prepare the lab room for a different course on Monday afternoon. Thus, the instructor would be responsible for approximately 5 hours of uncompensated work per week over 7 weeks (1 hour coming in the evening to set up the lab again; 3 hours supervising the student one-on-one during an evening; and 1 hour taking the lab down afterwards) for a total of 35 hours. This seems like grievance territory if it occurs occasionally or lawsuit territory if it happens regularly. It also creates laboratory safety and potential discomfort issues, as the instructor and student would likely be the only two people on that floor of the building during an evening (the laboratory space is used for other classes in daytime). Alternatively, the instructor would be required to pass the student even if she had not done the work, which seems like grievance territory for the instructor and poor training for the student. Finally, the instructor could fail the student despite the attendance policy, which would be clear grounds for the student to sue to university. While this situation is currently unusual, if we create a policy that clearly allows athletes to miss any or all classes without repercussions, then there will be no disincentive for athletics to schedule even more events that conflict with academic schedules. With the current attendance policy on the books, we instead worked with the student to find a suitable course at another university, allowing her to complete laboratory and stay on track for graduation.

As another example related to me, a student in computer science last summer missed a full week of a 4-week summer course due to an athletic event. The instructor spent many uncompensated hours meeting with the student afterwards to catch them up. While the instructor was willing to do so in that case, it is an unfair expectation, especially for adjunct instructors.

The proposed policy may be appropriate in some units, but the language would prevent all units and classes from adopting a stricter policy. In the sciences, it would compromise our academics and create an expectation for substantial amounts of uncompensated work by instructors. As such, it is not in keeping with the strategic goal of being a university of choice for faculty or the goal of providing rigorous education, including high-impact experiential learning opportunities for

students. Instead, I hope that we could develop a more flexible policy that balances academics with athletics.

6) Additional feedback from SCW:

One told me in conversation that he makes allowances he deems necessary for students in special circumstances anyway, so he wasn't feeling strongly one way or another about the policy wording change.

"Hmm. I read this as positive because it's letting the students know that those are the only reasons they HAVE to be allowed excused absences and leaving more discretion to us in our attendance policies. I definitely agree that our students have lots of different legitimate things going on that require them to miss class for good reasons, but I don't know how we could verbalize that without getting into a "give them a mile" situation. I like the discretion.

"For example, in the past year, I have had a student tell me they had to miss class because they had to pay their rent, and another student tell me they had to miss class because their floors were being waxed. :-/

"I have also had two students have babies, one on military duty, and several have major, real family problems caring for seriously ill family members (real ones, not the made up ones that we sometimes get...). And every single one of them finished their work and got credit for the classes, with exceptions for late work and extra absences that I allowed. I personally am concerned more with a general policy that could be taken advantage of than the policy as it is proposed just because I know that I can allow extra room for students when it is needed. However, I know that not all instructors will extend grace when they need to, so I am certainly willing to go with the majority here.

7) Hi Carmen,

I am fine with it. I think it is very difficult to create an attendance policy that satisfies all departments and programs.

8)

- One was concerned that military duty was not listed as an excused absence. I see "military duty" in the bulleted list, but their concern might be with the first paragraph that specifies university-sanctioned events and religious observances as excused.
- The proposed policy states, "Notification from the Dean of Students Office does not constitute an excused absence." If this notification isn't an excused absence, then what is it? Is this saying that even if the University tells me a student has jury duty, that if the student doesn't tell me themselves, I don't have to count it as an excused absence?
- One faculty wants to ensure that practice is not considered (or misinterpreted as) a university-sanctioned event. They mentioned how in the past coaches have tried to get classes moved so they don't conflict with practice and/or told faculty athletes would be consistently late b/c of practice.
- One mentioned that if this policy shows respect for athletics as a University-sponsored activity worthy of missing class then coaches must also show respect for academics by working to schedule games/travel so students are not in a position where they, for example, miss 7 Fridays a semester. Coaches have to remember that academics must take precedence.

- The policy says, "Students should note that an instructor has the right to establish the attendance policy for each class and may choose to exact a grade penalty after a certain number of absences." - So, if my policy is that students can miss three classes, after which their grade is docked 15%, but a student misses four classes for athletic reasons, can I still dock that student 15%?
- Similarly, if the professor's policy is students who miss more than 20% of the class automatically fail, does that still stand if all of those absences are sports-related?

Appendix Two University of South Carolina Attendance Policy

New Attendance Policy (for Undergrad Bulletin)

Class Attendance

Students are obligated to complete all assigned work promptly, to attend class regularly, and to participate in whatever class discussion may occur.

Absence from more than 15 percent of the scheduled class sessions is excessive and the instructor may choose to exact a grade penalty for absences beyond this threshold.

Faculty members are not required to enforce an attendance policy. Generally, faculty members are encouraged to be understanding toward the needs of students beyond the classroom. However, if faculty members choose to enforce an attendance policy and penalize students for excessive absences, they must do so consistently and equitably for all students.

If faculty members choose to enforce an attendance policy in any class, they should notify that class, specifically in the course syllabus, of the policy and the precise penalty for excessive absences. The policy cannot penalize students for absences (of all sorts) that amount to less than 15 percent of scheduled class sessions.

Students are expected to be fully honest with faculty members and university staff and administrators when they make requests to excuse absences. Any dishonesty in requesting excused absences or accommodations for the timely completion of work missed due to excused absences is regarded as a violation of the Carolinian Creed and is subject to disciplinary action through the Office of Academic Integrity.

It is recommended that faculty members include in their course syllabi statements that encourage students who anticipate being absent for excusable reasons, to meet with faculty members a reasonable time in advance, to discuss the possibility of having the absence excused, and to arrange accommodations to complete any work missed due to the absence.

It is also recommended that faculty members also include in their course syllabi statements that encourage students who are absent for excusable reasons that cannot be anticipated, to inform faculty members of the reason for their absences as promptly as possible. In cases of such unanticipated absences, students should meet with faculty members soon after their return to class to discuss the possibility of having the absence excused, and to arrange accommodations to complete any work missed due to the absence.

It is recommended that faculty consider the following circumstances as potentially excusing a student's absence:

- participation in an authorized University activity (such as musical performances, academic competitions, or varsity athletic events, in which the student plays a formal role in a University sanctioned event)
- required participation in military duties
- mandatory admission interviews for professional or graduate school which cannot be rescheduled

- participation in legal proceedings or administrative duties that require a student's presence
- death or major illness in a student's immediate family
- illness of a dependent family member
- major religious holy day for a tradition to which the student adheres (A calendar of many major and minor religious holy days in various traditions can be found on www.interfaithcalendar.org; faculty members with questions about the observance of a religious holy day and its impact on class attendance may be able to contact representatives for that religious tradition on campus, either through the chair of a relevant constituent group within the President's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, or through the U of SC religious workers council. Faculty members seeking such information should contact the Department of Student Affairs, liaison to the religious workers council.)
- illness that is too severe or contagious for the student to attend class
- weather-related emergencies

The Undergraduate Student Ombudsperson in the Division of Student Affairs is available to assist students with verifying documentation when requested by faculty members.

Faculty members have discretion in the courses that they teach regarding the choice to excuse absences that would otherwise be penalizable, so long as faculty members maintain consistency, and equitability toward all students. Faculty members also have discretion in the courses that they teach to choose the specific accommodations offered to students to complete any work missed due to potentially excusable absences.